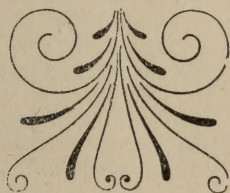


Canadian Poems



James McCarroll (1815-1896)

THE GREY LINNET

There's a little grey friar in yonder green bush,
Clothed in sackcloth—a little grey friar,
Like a druid of old in his temple—but hush!
He's at vespers; you must not go nigher.

Yet hark! can those strains be addressed to the skies,
And around us so wantonly float
Till the glowing refrain like a shining thread flies
From the silvery reel of his throat?

When he roves, though he stains not his path through the air
With the splendour of tropical wings,
All the lustre denied to his russet plumes there
Flashes forth through his lay when he sings.

For the little grey friar is so wondrous wise,
Though in such a plain garb he appears,
That on finding he can't reach your soul through your eyes
He steals in through the gates of your ears.

But—the cheat!—'Tis not heaven he's warbling about,
Other passions less holy, betide,
For behold! there's a little grey nun peeping out
From a bunch of green leaves at his side.

DAWN

With folded wings of dusky light
Upon the purple hills she stands
An angel between day and night
With tinted shadows in her hands.

Till suddenly transfigured there,
With all her dazzling plumes unfurled,
She climbs the crimson-flooded air
And flies in glory o'er the world.

Charles Sangster (1822-1893)

A NORTHERN RUNE

Loud rolleth the rune, the martial rune
 Of the Norse King-harpist bold
 He's proud of his line, he's erect as the pine
 That springs on the mountains old.
 Through the hardy North, when his song goes forth;
 It rings like the clash of steel;
 Yet we have not a fear, for his heart's sincere,
 And his blasts we love to feel.

Then hi! for the storm
 The wintry storm,
 That maketh the stars grow dim
 Not a nerve shall fail,
 Not a heart shall quail,
 When he rolls his grand old hymn.

Oh, hale and gay is that Norse King Grey
 And his limbs are both stout and strong
 And his eye is keen as a falchion's sheen
 When it sweeps to avenge a wrong.
 The Aurora's dance is his merry glance
 As it speeds through the starry fields
 And his anger falls upon Odin's halls
 Like the crash of a thousand shields.

Then hi! for the storm, etc.

(Third stanza omitted)

When the woods are stirred by the antlered herd
 He comes like a nimrod bold,
 And the forest groans as his mighty tones
 Swoop down on the startled fold;
 In his mantle white he defies the Night,
 With the air of a king so free;
 Then hurrah for the rune, the North-King's rune
 For his sons, his sons are we.

Isabella Valancy Crawford (1851-1887)

THE CITY TREE (Selected Verses)

I stand within the stony, arid town,
 I gaze for ever on the narrow street,
 I hear for ever passing up and down
 The ceaseless tramp of feet.

I know no brotherhood with far-locked woods,
 where branches bourgeon from a kindred sap,
 Where o'er mossed roots, in cool green solitudes,
 Small silver brooklets lap.

When to and fro my branches wave and sway
 Answ'ring the feeble wind that faintly calls,
 They kiss no kindred boughs, but touch alway
 The stones of climbing walls.

Not mine the clamoring tempest to defy,
 Tossing the proud crest of my dusky leaves,
 Defender of small flowers, that trembling lie
 Against my barky greaves.

And yet my branches spread, a kingly sight,
 In the close prison of the drooping air,
 When sun-vexed noons are at their fiery height
 My shade is broad, and there

Come city toilers, who their hour of ease
 Weave out to precious seconds as they lie
 Pillowed on horny hands, to hear the breeze
 Through my great branches die.

I see no flowers, but as the children race
 With noise and clamor through the dusky street,
 I see the bud of many an angel face,
 I hear their merry feet.

No violets look up, but, shy and grave,
 The children pause and lift their crystal eyes
 To where my emerald branches call and wave
 As to the mystic skies.

George Frederick Cameron (1854-1885)

TRUE GREATNESS

What is true greatness? Is't to climb
 Above the rocks and shoals of time
 To sculpture on some height sublime
 A name,
 To live immortal in its prime
 And flush of fame?

What is true greatness? Is't to lead
 Your armed hirelings on to bleed
 And move, a terrible god indeed,
 An hour;
 To sate your lust of gold, or greed
 Of despot power?

What is true greatness? Question not
 But go to yon secluded spot
 And enter yonder humble cot
 And find
 A husbandman who never fought
 Or wronged his kind.

To whom the lips of war are dumb
 Who loves far more than beat of drum
 The cattle's low, the insect's hum
 In air:
 And find true greatness in its sum
 And total there!

What is true greatness? 'Tis to clear
 From sorrow's eye the glistening tear
 To comfort there, to cherish here,
 To bless,
 To aid, encourage, and to cheer
 Distress.

Charles G. D. Roberts (b. 1860)

AN APRIL ADORATION

Sang the sunrise on an amber morn—
"Earth, be glad! An April day is born.

"Winter's done, and April's in the skies,
Earth, look up with laughter in your eyes!"

Putting off her dumb dismay of snow
Earth bade all her unseen children grow.

Then the sound of growing in the air
Rose to God, a liturgy of prayer.

And the thronged succession of the days
Uttered up to God a psalm of praise.

Laughed the running sap in every vein
Laughed the running flurries of warm rain.

Laughed the life in every wandering root,
Laughed the tingling cells of bud and shoot.

God in all the concord of their mirth
Heard the adoration-song of Earth.

THE DEPARTING OF GLUSKAP

It is so long ago; and men well-nigh
 Forget what gladness was, and how the earth
 Gave corn in plenty, and the rivers fish,
 And the woods meat, before he went away.
 His going was on this wise.

All the works

And words and ways of men and beasts became
 Evil, and all their thoughts continually
 Were but of evil. Then he made a feast.
 Upon the shore that is beside the sea
 That takes the setting sun he ordered it,
 And called the beasts thereto. Only the men
 He called not, seeing them evil utterly.
 He fed the panther's crafty brood, and filled
 The lean wolf's hunger; from the hollow tree
 His honey stayed the bear's terrific jaws;
 And the brown rabbit couched at peace within
 The circling shadow of the eagle's wings.
 And when the feast was done he told them all
 That now, because their ways were evil grown
 That they should look upon his face no more.

It was near sunset, and the wind was still,
 And down the yellow shore a thin wave washed
 Slowly; and Gluskap launched his birch canoe,
 And spread his yellow sail, and moved from shore
 Though no wind followed, streaming in the sail,
 Or roughening the clear water after him.
 And all the beasts stood by the shore and watched.
 Then to the West appeared a long, red trail
 Over the wave; and Gluskap sailed and sang
 Till the canoe grew little, like a bird,
 And black, and vanished in the shining trail.
 And when the beasts could see his form no more
 They still could hear him, singing as he sailed,
 And still they listened, hanging down their heads,
 In long row, where the thin wave washed and fled.
 But when the sound of singing died, and when
 They lifted up their voices in their grief,
 Lo! on the mouth of every beast a strange
 New tongue! Then rose they all and fled apart
 Nor met again in council from that day.

Across the fog the moon lies fair
 Transfused with ghostly amethyst;
 O White Night, charm to wonderment,
 The cattle in the mist.

Thy touch, O grave mysteriarch,
 Makes dull familiar things divine,
 O grant of thy revealing gift
 Be some small portion mine.

Make thou my vision sane and clear
 That I may see what beauty clings
 In common forms, and find the soul
 Of unregarded things.

Archibald Lampman (1861-1899)

SOLITUDE

How still it is here in the woods. The trees
 Stand motionless, as if they did not dare
 To stir, lest it should break the spell. The air
 Hangs quiet as spaces in a marble frieze.
 Even this little brook that runs at ease,
 Whispering and gurgling in its knotted bed,
 Seems but to deepen with its curling thread
 Of sound, the shadowy sun-pierced silences.

Sometimes a hawk screams, or a woodpecker
 Startles the stillness from its fixed mood
 With his loud, careless tap. Sometimes I hear
 The dreamy whitethroat, from some distant tree,
 Pipe slowly on the listening solitude
 His five pure notes, succeeding pensively.

IN THE CITY

I wandered in a city great and old,
 At morn, at noon, and when the evening fell
 And round my spirit gathered, like a spell,
 Its splendour and its tumult and its gold,
 The mysteries and memories of its years
 Its victors and fair women, all the life
 The joy, the power, the passion, and the strife
 Its sighs of hand-locked lovers, and its tears.

And whereso in that mighty city, free
 And with clear eyes and eager heart I trod,
 My thought became a passion high and strong,
 And all the spirit of humanity
 Soft as a child and potent as a god,
 Drew near to me and rapt me like a song.

Duncan Campbell Scott (b. 1862)

THE CANADIAN'S HOME SONG FROM ABROAD

There is rain upon the window
 There is wind upon the tree;
 The rain is slowly sobbing
 The wind is blowing free;
 It bears my weary heart
 To my own country.

I hear the whitethroat calling
 Hid in the hazel ring,
 Deep in the misty hollows
 I hear the sparrows sing,
 I see the blood-root starting
 All silvered with the spring.

I hear the wolf-tongued rapid
 Howl in the rocky break;
 Beyond the pines at the portage
 I hear the trapper wake
 His '*En roulant ma boule*.'
 From the clear gloom of the lake.

Oh! take me back to the homestead
 To the great rooms warm and low,
 Where the frost creeps on the casement
 When the year comes in with snow;
 Give me, give me the old folk
 Of the dear long ago.

Oh, land of the dusky balsam
 And the darling maple tree
 Where the cedar buds and berries
 And the pine grows strong and free!
 My heart is weary and weary
 For my own country.

Wilfred Campbell (1861-1917)

LINES ON A SKELETON (Selected)

This was the mightiest house that God e'er made
This roofless mansion of the incorruptible.
These joists and bastions once bore walls as fair
As Solomon's palace of white ivory.

Here majesty and love and beauty dwelt,
Shakespeare's wit from these torn walls looked down,
Sadness like the autumn made it bare,
Passion like a tempest shook its base,
And joy filled all its halls with madness.

Beneath its dome the agony of the Jew
The pride of Caesar or the hate of Cain,
The thought of Plato or the heart of Burns
Once dwelt in some dim form of being's light.

But whither thence is fled that tenant rare,
That weird in dweller of this wasted house?
Back from the petalled bloom withdraws the dew,
The melody from the shell, the day from heaven,
To build afar earth's resurrection morn.

And so, Love trusts, in some diviner air
The lord of this lorn mansion dwells in light
Of vaster beauty, vaster scope and dream;
Where weariness and gladness satiate not,
Where power and splendid being know no ruin,
And evil greeds and envyings work no wrong.

Bliss Carman (b. 1861)

A SON OF THE SEA

I was born for deep-sea faring
I was bred to put to sea
Stories of my father's daring
Filled me at my mother's knee.

I was sired among the surges
I was cubbed amid the foam
All my heart is in the verges
And the sea-wind is my home.

All my boyhood, from far vernal
Bounds of being came to me
Dream-like, plangent and eternal
Memories of the plunging sea.

TREES

In the Garden of Eden, planted by God,
There were goodly trees in the springing sod.

Trees of beauty and height and grace
To stand in splendour before his face.

Apple and hickory, ask and pear
Oak and beech and the tulip rare.

The trembling aspen, the noble pine,
The sweeping elm by the river line;

Trees for the birds to build and sing,
And lilac trees for a joy in spring;

Trees to turn at the frosty call
And carpet the ground for their Lord's footfall;

Trees for fruitage and fire and shade,
Trees for the cunning builder's trade;

Wood for the bow, the spear, and the flail
The keel and the mast of the daring sail;

He made them of every grain and girth
For the use of man in the Garden of Earth.

Then lest the soul should not lift her eyes
From the gift to the Giver of Paradise.

On the crown of a hill, for all to see,
God planted a scarlet maple tree.

THE GRAVEDIGGER

Oh, the shambling sea is a sexton old,
And well his work is done.
With an equal grave for lord and knave,
He buries them every one.

Then hoy and rip, with a rolling hip,
He makes for the nearest shore;
And God who sent him a thousand ship,
Will send him a thousand more;
But some he'll save for a bleaching grave,
And shoulder them in to shore—
Shoulder them in, shoulder them in,
Shoulder them in to shore.

Oh, the ships of Greece and the ships of Tyre
Went out, and where are they?
In the port they made, they are delayed
With the ships of yesterday.

He followed the ships of England far
As the ships of long ago;
And the ships of Francè they led him a dance
But he laid them all arow.

Oh, a loafing, idle lubber to him
Is the sexton of the town;
For sure and swift, with a guiding lift
He shovels the dead men down.

Oh, crooked is he, but strong enough
To handle the tallest mast;
From the royal barque to the slaver dark
He buries them all at last.

Then hoy and rip, etc.

Frederick George Scott (b. 1862)

JACK

You're only a dumb little dog, Jack,
About ten or twelve pounds or so,
And your wits must be all in a fog, Jack,
If you have any wits, I know.

But you've two such soft brown eyes, Jack,
And such long grey silky hair;
And what very much more I prize, Jack,
Such a warm little heart in there.

They say warm hearts are rare, Jack,
And I almost believe that it's true;
But there aren't many hearts can compare, Jack,
With that staunch little heart in you.

Of course we that speak and can read, Jack,
Have plenty of friendships sweet;
But in spite of them all, there's a need, Jack,
For a friend like the friend at my feet.

This planet must seem a queer place, Jack,
To your poor little limited mind;
For I fancy you never can trace, Jack,
The reasons for half that you find.

You've not bothered with questions like us, Jack,
About forces and morals and laws;
And you never get worried or fuss, Jack,
When you cannot discover the cause.

But you go our own little way, Jack,
With a wag of the tail for a friend;
And in spite of our talk, I dare say, Jack,
That we don't do much more, in the end.

DAWN

The immortal spirit hath no bars
 To circumscribe its dwelling place,
 My soul hath pastured with the stars
 Upon the meadowlands of space.

My mind and ear at times have caught,
 From realms beyond our mortal reach,
 The utterance of Eternal Thought
 Of which all nature is the speech.

And high above the seas and lands
 On peaks just tipped with morning light,
 My dauntless spirit mutely stands
 With eagle wings outstretched for flight.

LABOR INSTANS

Rude Labour, toiling on through hopeless night
 Naked and starved, scorn heaped upon his head,
 Now rises in his strength with sword to smite,
 And asks the nations for his daily bread.

ON DARWIN'S TOMB IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The Muse, when asked what words alone
 Were worthy tribute to his fame,
 Took up her pen, and on the stone
 Inscribed his name.

Frances Beatrice Taylor

DEDICATION

God, who hast set our pleasant heritage
 Foursquare between the mountains and the sea:
 Lo, the long years of labor and of wage,
 We dedicate to Thee!

Out of the void, the cry that summoned these
 Our sires of unforgotten yesterdays,
 Surely hath bidden us upon our knees
 To give our meed of praise!

These thronging streets these heaven-soaring towers,
 These cities lifted from a broken clod,
 We hold in bond from mightier hands than ours
 And they from Thine, O God!

Theirs were the tears that dewed the untrodden land,
 Ours but to reap the ripened crops they set;
 In all the bounties emptied from Thy hand
 Grant we do not forget!

Theirs was to blaze the trail for us to take,
 Theirs was vision—ours the broadening way—
 Lord, for the fathers of our race we make
 High testament to-day!

Somewhere is written, every hurt of theirs,
 Havoc of storm and deluge, drought and frost;
 Some precious phial holds their gathered prayers
 So that not one is lost.

Lord we have builded swift, and none too wise,
 Our sires are dead, our sons are yet to be—
 Grant us strong wills and unbeclouded eyes,
 To offer them to Thee.

Take Thou our hands, and make the journey plain,
 Guide Thou our hands to fairly end the page—
 Scourge us from sloth—till we return again
 A goodlier heritage.